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Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /013 W
----------013819 140532Z /11-R
P 140445Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8899

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 0055/1

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAID EAGR SWEL UNDP PORG LA US
SUBJECT: US FOOD AID TO LAOS

REF: A STATE 8276, B 77 VIENTIANE 1305, C 77 VIENTIANE 1690, D VIENTIANE 0020, E VIENTIANE 0030, F 77 UDORN A-01, G VIENTIANE 0017

1. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS PROVIDED IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS ON FOOD AID TO LAOS POSED IN THE LETTERED SUBPARAGRAPHS OF PARGRAPH (2), REF A: WITH REFERENCE TO THE QUESTIONS IN SUBPARAGRAPH (A), FRANK HARTVELT, UNDP ACTING RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVE, TOLD US JANUARY 12 THAT HIS OFFICE WAS READY TO OVERSEE THE DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD GRANTED BY INDIVIDUAL STATES IF ASKED TO DO SO. THE UNDP OFFICE IN LAOS ALREADY HAD A WFP ADVISOR ON ITS STAFF. THE LAO HAD PROMISED THAT UNDP STAFFERS WOULD BE ABLE TO TRAVEL AND GIVE ADVICE ANYWHERE IN LAOS IN CONNECTION WITH FOOD DISTRIBUTION PROGRAMS. SEVERAL PRELIMINARY, INVESTIGATIVE TRIPS HAD ALREADY TAKEN PLACE DURING 1977 TO LUANG PRABANG, SAVANNAKHET, SARAVANE, ATTOPEU AND HOUA PHAN (REF B, C). HARTVELT SAID HE ANTICIPATED NO DIFFICULTIES IN OVER-SEEING THE DISTRIBUTION OF UNDP/WFP FOOD ASSISTANCE.

2. HARTVELT SAID THAT THE UNDP/WFP HAD NOT YET IM-PORTED ANY FOOD THIS YEAR BUT WAS IN THE PROCESS OF
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NEGOTIATING PRICE AND DELIVERY SCHEDULES FOR 12,000 TONS OF THAI RICE AND 6,000 TONS OF WHEAT. THESE COMMODITIES SHOULD ARRIVE IN LAOS SOON.

3. THE UNHCR IMPORTS AND DISTRIBUTES RICE AID TO RE-SETTLEMENT PROJECTS FOR DISPLACED PERSONS AS A PART OF THEIR REGULAR PROGRAM. PETER MEIJER, UNHCR PROGRAM

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COORDINATOR, HAS TOLD US THAT THEY EXTENDED TENDERS TO RICE EXPORTERS AND BOUGHT RICE FROM THE LOWEST BIDDER. SO FAR THE BID HAD ALWAYS BEEN WON BY A PRIVATE THAI COMPNAY. UNHCR IN THE PAST HAD MANAGED RICE IMPORTS FOR WFP AND SEVERAL BILATERAL DONORS. ONCE THE RICE WAS SHIPPED TO THE LPDR, THE UNHCR TURNED IT OVER TO THE MINISTY OF INTERIOR FOR TRANSPORTATION AND DISTRI-BTUION TO THE PLAIN OF JARS AND OTHER INTERIOR LOCA-TIONS. UNHCR OFFICIALS HAD MADE SEVERAL TRIPS TO THE RURAL AREAS TO INSPECT THE END-USE OF THEIR AID. ALTHOUGH SOME UNHCR OFFICIALS WOULD LIKE TO HAVE MORE SUPERVISORY CONTROL OVER THE DISTRIBUTION OF THEIR RICE AID, FOR THE MOST PART THEY WERE SATISFIED WITH THE PRESENT WORKING ARRANGEMENT.

4. IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS POSED IN PARA 2 (B), THE UNDP HAS PROVDED US WITH FOOD AID DATA FROM BILATERAL AND INTERNATIONAL DONORS THAT UPDATES THE INFORMATION THE EMBASSY REPORTED IN REF D PARA 5. THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM WILL GIVE 12,000 TONS OF RICE AND 6,000 TONS OF OTHER FOODSTUFFS (CEREALS) AT A TOTAL COST OF$5.6 MILLION. THE UNHCR WILL GIVE 2,000 TONS OF RICE AT A TOTAL
COST OF $400,000. THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY WILL CHANNEL THROUGH THE UNHCR 5,000 TONS OF OTHER OODSTUFF (WHEAT) AT A TOTAL COST OF $1 MILLION. UNICEF WILL
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GIVE 900 TONS OF OTHER FOODSTUFF AT A COST OF $180,000. SWEDEN WILL GIVE 10,000 TONS OF RICE AND 5,000 TONS OF OTHER FOODSTUFF (WHEAT) AT A COST OF $3.2 MILLION. THE NETHERLANDS WILL GIVE 9,090 TONS OF RICE AT A COST OF $2 MILLION. AUSTRALIA WILL GIVE 1,000 TONS OF RICE AT A COST OF $240,000. THAILAND WILL GIVE 15 TONS OF RICE AT A COST OF $7,000. INDIA WILL GIVE 1,000 TONS OF RICE AT A COST OF $240,000. CARITAS WILL GIVE 540 TONS OF RICE CHANNELED THROUGH THE UNHCR AT A COST OF $130,000. AS REPORTED REF E, THE USSR, PRC AND SRV HAVE TENTATIVELY INDICATED THEY WOULD PROVIDE SOME FOOD AID, MOST LIKELY WHEAT.

5. AS FOR THE ASEAN RESPONSE TO THE LAO EMERGENCY AID REQUEST, WE NOTE THE THAI TOKEN GRANT MENTIONED IN THE PRECEDING PARAGRAPH. INDONESIAN AMBASSADOR JUSUF TOLD US JANUARY 12 THAT ALTHOUGH INDONESIA COULD NOT GIVE FOOD SINCE IT WAS A NET IMPORTER, HIS GOVERNEENT WAS CONSIDERING CONTRIBUTION FERTILIZER AND SMALL DIESEL ENGINES FOR IRRIGATION PUMPS. WITH RESPECT TO THE GENERAL QUESTION OF AID TO THE INDOCHINA COUNTRIES, JUSUF SAID THAT THE ASEAN POSITION WAS STILL ONE OF

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OPPOSITION TO ANY REPARATIONS OR DEVELOPMENTAL AID.
ASEAN WAS STILL WARY OF ANY PROGRAMS WHICH MIGHT IN-
CREASE THE THREAT WHICH THEY FELT VIET NAM POSED.
HUMANITARIAN AID, JUSUF SAID, WAS A DIFFERENT MATTER.
HE SAID ASEAN WOULD FAVOR THIS KIND OF ASSISTANCE.

6. IN RESPONSE TO PARA 2 (C), HARTVELT SAID THAT THERE
HAD NOT BEEN ANY DOCUMENTED REPORTS FROM INTER-
NATIONAL AGENCY SOURCES OF STARVATION IN LAOS. HE SAID
HE DOUBTED THAT THERE WAS STARVATION HERE SINCE THE LAO
HAD UPP TO NOW HAD THE OPTION OF TURNING THEMSELVES INTO
REFUGEES IN THAILAND BEFORE THEY STARVED.

7. AS FOR MALNUTRITION,HARTVELT SAID THERE WERE ALSO
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NO DOCUMENTED REPORTS AS YET. HOWEVER, DURING HIS
RECENT TRIP TO SOUTHERN LAOS, (REF C) HE HAD TALKED WITH
VILLAGERS WHO WERE OBVIOUSLY SHOWING SIGNS OF POOR
NOURISHMENT. THEY HAD TOLD HIM THAT THEY HAD REDUCED
THEIR DAILY CONSUMPTION FROM TWO BOELS OF RICE TO ONE
AND WERE ALREADY MAKING FREQUENT WALKING TRIPS AS MUCH
AS FIVE KILOMETERS TO MOUTAINOUS AREAS WHERE THEY

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 ONY-00 /013 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L FINAL SECTION OF 2 VIENTIANE 0055/2

COULD GATHER ROOTS AND FRUIT TO SUPPLEMENT THEIR DIET.
HARTVELT SAID HE HAD SEEN FAMILY RICE STORAGE AREAS
WITH ONLY A FEW KILOS OF GRAIN LEFT.

8. THE FRENCH SURGEON AT VIENTIANE'S MAHASOT HOSPITAL,

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DR. JAECQ, TOLD US JANUARY 12 THAT HE HAD DISCERNED NO INCREASE IN MALNUTRITION AMONG THE CASES HE HAD SEEN RECENTLY. HE ADDED THAT HE HAD NO WAY OF KNOWING WHAT THE SITUATION WAS LIKE IN THE COUNTRYSIDE BECAUSE HE MINISTERED PRIMARILY TO THE VIENTIANE POPULATION.

9. RECENT REPORTS FROM UDORN REPORT THAT MEO TRIBESMEN FLEEING LAOS TO THAILAND SUFFER FROM LACK OF FOOD (REF F). A SOVIET WHO PHYSICIAN TOLD US ON JULY19, 1977, THAT HE HAD FOUND CONSIDERABLE MALNOURISHMENT WHEN HE HAD MADE A FIELD TRIP TO THE RURAL AREAS IN LAOS. (COMMENT: THE POCKETS OF MALNUTRITION THAT HAVE ALWAYS EXISTED IN LAOS ARE CAUSED MORE BY UNBALANCED DIETS THAN BY A LACK OF FOOD. (END COMMENT)

10. IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION POSED IN PARA 2 (D), HARTVELT SAID THAT THE LATEST UN DROUGHT REPORT CONTAINED A SPECIFIC CERTIFICATION THAT STORAGE FACILITIES WERE ADEQUATE (SEE PAGE 3 OF THE POUCHED REPORT AND REF G, PARA 4.). HE SAID THE LAO WERE SERIOUS---ALMOST FANATIC--ON THE SUBJECT OF PROPER STORAGE . HARTVELT WAS QUITE FRANK IN STATING, HOWEVER, THAT THE STORAGE CONFIDENTIAL

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SYSTEM WAS NOT WITHOUT PROBLEMS, SUCH AS RATS. NEVERTHELESS, HE SAID THAT WHERE IMPORVEMENT WAS NEEDED, HE UNDP WOULD HELP AND THAT TTHE LAO WOULD ACCEPT SUCH HELP.

11. IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION POSED IN PARA 2 (E), THE MENNONITE CENTRAL COMMITTEE AND THE AMERICAN FRIENDS SEFVVICE COMMITTEE EACH SPONSOR TWO RESIDENT REPRESENTATIVES TO OVERSEE SMALL AID PROGRAMS IN LAOS. THE MENNONITES PROVIDED ABOUT $215,000FOR AID PROJECTS IN 1977/78 AND THE QUAKERS ABOUT $20,000 IN 1977/78. VERY LITTLE OF THEIR AID CONSISTED OF FOOD COMMODITIES; ONLY SMALL AMOUNTS OF CANNED GOODS WERE DONATED BY PRIVATE CHRUCH GROUPS. BOTH GROUPS, HOWEVER, HAVE TARGETED THE AGRUCULTURAL SECTOR BY GIVING PROJECT AND TECHNICAL AID. THE MENNONITES SUPPORT A VEGETABLE SEED AND ANIMAL FEED SEED MULTIPLICATION PROJECT, AND THE QUAKERS HOPE TO CONTRIBUTE TO A NORWEGIAN AGRICULTURAL MACHINE TOOL REPAIR CENTER PROJECT. ALTHOUGH NOT BY DEFINITION AN "AMERICAN" ORGANIZATION, THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES PROVIDED $5 MILLION FOR AID TO LAOS FOR 1977/78. SOME OF THIS AID MIGHT BE USED FOR FOOD AID.

12. WITH REFERENCE TO THE SPECIFIC POINTS ON WHICH REPORTING IS REQUIRED BY 2 FAM 064, WE REFER THE DEPARTMENT TO THE POUCHED UN DROUGHT REPORT AND REF G

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FOR INFORMATION ON THEORIGIN AND EXTENT OF THE
DISASTER. IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE DEPARTMENT'S
INSTRUCTIONS, NO DECISIONS OR ACTIONS HAVE BEEN TAKEN
BY THE CHIEF OF MISSION PENDING CONGRESSIONAL CONSULTA-
TION, BUT SEE SEPTEL (VIENTIANE 54) FOR RECOMMENDED ACTIONS, INCL-
UDING AN ESTIMATE OF THE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE WHICH SHOULD AT
LEAST BE SUPPLIED FROM THE UNITED STATES. AN APPRAISAL
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OF THE EFFORTS MADE BY LAO AUTHORITIES TO COPE WITH THE
DISASTER IS CONTAINED IN THE LAO EMERGENCY AID APPEAL
(VIENTIANE 20) AND IN THE EMBASSY'S DESCRIPTION OF THE
LAO DRY SEASON RICE CROP EFFORT (VIENTIANE 53). AN
APPRAISAL OF THE ASSISTANCE OFFERED BY OTHER COUNTRIES
IS GIVEN IN PARAGRAPH (4) ABOVE.

13. AS FOR THE IMPACT OF U.S. DISASTER ASSISTANCE AND
ITS EFFECT ON U.S. FOREIGN POLICY, ANY AID WHICH WE
MIGHT GIVE WILL MOST DIRECTLY SUPPORT OUR POLICY GOAL
OF PROVIDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE WHENEVER IT IS
REQUIRED AND WHENEVER THE U.S. IS ABLE TO RESPOND.
SUCH ASSISTANCE SUPPORTS THE BASIC HUMAN RIGHT TO
SUFFICIANT FOOD TO SUSTAIN LIFE. THERE MIGHT ALSO BE A
GENERAL FOREIGN POLICY BENEFIT IN THE CONTRAST BETWEEN
OUR RESPONSE TO THE LAO REQUEST AND THAT OF THE
"SOCIALIST BLOC". DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER NOUPHAN IS
SAID TO HAVE COMMENTED BITTERLY TO THE INDONESAIN
AMBASSADOR THAT AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1977, "NOT A SINGLE
GRAIN" OF FOOD AID HAD ARRIVED FROM LAOS' SOCIALIST
FRIENDS.

14. IN ADDITION, HOWEVER, THERE IS A MORE SPECIFIC
POSSIBLE FOREIGN POLICY ASPECT TO EMERGENCY DROUGHT AID
TO LAOS. SUCH AID COULD BE A CLEAR INDICATION TO THE
SRV OF THE ADVANTAGES WHICH CAN BE DERIVED FROM HAVING
NORMAL DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. WE HAVE SUCH
RELATIONS WITH LAOS BUT NOT WITH VIET NAM, AND SHOULD
EMERGENCY DROUGHT AID TO LAOS BE APPROVED, WE WOULD
HAVE A SPECIFIC DEVELOPMENT FROM WHICH HANOI COULD DRAW
ITS ON CONCLUSIONS.

15. FYI: THE EMBASSY IS VERY MUCH AWARE OF THE FACT
THAT NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE ON ANY RESPONSE TO THE
LAO APPEAL. IN ALL OUR TALKS WITH OTHER EMBASSIES, UN
OFFICES, AND LAO OFFICIALS, WE HAVE STRESSED THE REAL
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AND SERIOUS POLITICAL PROBLEMS AID TO LAOS
FACES IN THE UNITED STATE. WE HAVE THOUGHT IT BEST TO
BE VERY FRANK, AND WE HAVE EVEN GONE TO THE POINT OF
CAREFULLY EXPLAINING THE VARIOUS BLOCS AND SHADES OF US
OPINION AND THE HISTORICAL FORCES BEHIND THEM. WE ARE
NOT SURE HOW MUCH OF THESE DETAILS HAVE BEEN ABSORBED,
BUT WE HAVE WANTED TO BE SURE NOT TO RAISE FALSE HOPES
AND NOT TO LET OUR HEARERS THINK THAT THE PROBLEMS WERE
MINOR OR EASILY OVERCOME. END FYI.
ROBERTS

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Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
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Format: TEL
From: VIENTIANE
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780162/aaaacagw.tel
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SAS ID: 3773252
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US FOOD AID TO LAOS
TAGS: EAID, EAGR, SWEL, PORG, LA, US, UNDP
To: STATE
Type: TE
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